

Community Services and Recreation

DRAFT MINUTES/APPROVED

To: Community Services Commission Members

From: Gerardo Sorkin, Director

Re: Commission Meeting March 3, 2009

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Laurie Jean Hannon at 5:32 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Present: Thomas Balga, Judith Meyers, Maggie Jensen, Judith McKay, Laurie-Jean Hannon, Donna Malley

Staff: Gerardo Sorkin, Director and Carla Pelliccio, Secretary

Absent: William Carey, Michael Compare, Walter Heinig

II. Acceptance of Minutes:

There is a correction to the January 6, 2009 meeting minutes. During the last meeting, Ms. Hannon stated that with the term end of certain Commissioners, the Commission has lost a Vice Chair. She suggested to her fellow Commission members that a Vice Chair should be appointed. It was stated that Mr. Heinig nominated himself as Vice Chair and then Judith McKay made a motion to nominate Mr. Heinig. Ms. Hannon seconded the motion. Correction: Judith McKay nominated Mr. Heinig as Vice Chair and Ms. Hannon made the motion to accept.

Donna Malley made a motion to accept the Minutes of December 2, 2008, seconded by Thomas Balga.

III. Correspondence:

An invitation was received by Laurie-Jean Hannon for a Community Conversation, taking place on March 21, 2009. Mr. Sorkin provided details surround this event. Community Services (in partnership with ACES) has received a grant to host this event. One hundred individuals of diverse backgrounds were invited to attend this event. The topic of the conversation is, "The future of North Haven, the future of our children," with a focus on matters surrounding early childhood education.

IV. Director's Report:

Daycare:

Enrollment: Preschool – all slots are filled/ 15 children

School Age – all slots are filled/ 30 children

Activity: The Preschoolers went on a walking field trip to Dr. Gargano's dental office. The students visited the office, saw the dental tool, learned about x-rays and how to care for their teeth. Dr. Gargano donated new toothbrushes, toothpaste and tooth-care charts for the children to take home.

The teachers continued the theme of dental health and nutrition by working on a unit –*Good Nutrition*. The children tasted an array of colorful vegetables.

Children made Valentines projects and brought in valentines to deliver to friends whose address is an assigned number. It was great number recognition fun. A Valentine Party took place on Friday, February 13 for all the children.

Staff trainings: Daycare Director Lauren Montano attended a meeting set up by the DPH in regard to the new regulations for licensing. In addition, Linda Flach, Child Behavioral Health Consultant met with staff to see how new methods were working and to help with any new behavioral problems.

In response to the daycare field trip to the dentist, Tom Balga asked if there were any dental clinics for children available in North Haven. While Mr. Sorkin was aware of dentist offices that see both adults and children, he was not sure of any particular offices that just specialized in pediatric dentistry, but will look into it and provide a list of dentists for the next meeting. Mr. Balga stated that Hamden recently had run a children's dental clinic (hosted by one of their local dentists) and they had a great turnout. He suggested that Community Services consider hosting a similar clinic in town. Mr. Sorkin will consider utilizing a local dentist to provide further training to Daycare staff and parents to further instill dental health.

Senior Center:

Senior Center Renovation and expansion Plans: \$750,000 grant awarded to pursue this project. The expected temporary move date is slated for mid April to the American Legion. During the construction period, the American Legion will be used for the main operations and many of the activities.

The pre-bid conference/ walk through for the grant will take place on Thursday, March 12, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the Senior Center. The bid opening will take place on Tuesday March 24, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. at the Finance Office.

The Senior Center garage will be demolished on Friday, March 13th by Public Works. The center will be closed on that day to ensure the safety of all members and staff. By utilizing our town resources for the demolition, an approximate savings of \$5,000 will be incurred.

Activities: Copies of the March 2009 *Senior Happenings* brochure of activities and events were distributed to each Commission member.

Mr. Sorkin attended the regularly scheduled monthly open forum discussions with the seniors today. As previously noted, this open discussion takes place among the seniors, on the first Tuesday, between 12:45pm - 1:15pm, monthly. This forum will allow the seniors to offer comments, suggestions and ask any questions they may have. The general topic this month surrounded the renovation plans and the temporary move to the American Legion during the construction.

Counseling:

Currently operating with no waiting list

Personnel: The new Counselor III, Christine Porto, LCSW began on Monday January 20, 2009. At this time, all positions have now successfully been filled. The staff consists of two Counselor III's (Lynn Apuzzo-Morin, LPC and Christine Porto, LCSW) and one Counselor IV (Jennifer Gosselin, LPC).

Documentation updates: Electronic medical reporting (EMR) is still being reviewed and our clinicians are investigating implementation of this process. We are moving forward with this plan to convert to EMR. This program is web-based so no software is necessary to run the program, and security measures are also incorporated, and is quite affordable to implement and maintain.

Youth Services:

A Community Forum hosted by the Substance Abuse Prevention Council (SAPC) in cooperation with our Youth Services Bureau was held on February 11, 2009 at North Haven High School at 7pm. There has been positive feedback since the presentation. It was estimated that over 200 people were in attendance.

This forum provided the opportunity to present information on the abuse of prescription drugs, what can be done to prevent this abuse, as well as what resources are available to residents in town.

Commissioner Tom Balga was one of the presenters for this event. Mr. Sorkin had asked Mr. Balga to comment on the event. Mr. Balga felt the event was very organized and was impressed by the representation from the high school and police department, as well as the number of attendees. Judith McKay had also been in attendance that evening and commented on what a great event it was.

A sub-committee of the SAPC has been formed to continue the momentum the forum has created. This sub-committee had met earlier today to continue conversation of further prevention activities. In response to this, Ms. McKay mentioned that she had noticed a lot of parents and adults had attended the February 11th presentation, and thus felt that it would be great if the subcommittee targeted more of the high school students as they plan further activities.

Mr. Sorkin and Nancy Leddy attended a workshop sponsored by DHMAS called Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment on Feb. 23, 2009. This workshop was helpful in providing further familiarity and awareness of trends in substance abuse prevention.

Planning for the 23rd annual Project Graduation festivities for the Class of 2009 has begun. The event will take place at Quassy Amusement Park, in Middlebury, CT. Due to the recent snow days, Project Graduation will be June 23, 2009.

Upcoming Project Graduation Fundraisers: Thursday, March 11th, 2009 at 7pm: A fashion show in partnership with Paul Mitchell Studio will take place at the high school. On Saturday, April 4th, 2009: Profits from the Concession Stand at Mr. North Haven will also go towards Project Graduation.

Community Services:

Energy Assistance Program: According to weekly report sent by the Community Action Agency, the Community Services staff has processed 314 applications for North Haven residents, this energy season to date. Of the 314 applications, 242 were approved, 72 were denied. If any denials were due to any administrative problems (i.e. insufficient documents), the community services staff proactively reached out to the residents to facilitate the appropriate paperwork in order to complete their application or assist them in reapplying. If applicants were denied due to income ineligibility, staff has been informing applicants of other resources that may be available to them including Operation Fuel and the Community Services Emergency Fuel Bank.

Requests for energy assistance still continue to come in, although at a much slower pace. The deadline for applying in has been extended to May 1st (instead of original date of February 28th). Thus, the office will continue to make appointments through May 1st, 2009, the official deadline of the statewide energy assistance program. The office has been proactive in educating residents about this program and encouraging residents to apply as soon as possible. Many may remember that a community-wide Energy Presentation took place at the middle school in early October, in which representatives from a variety of companies and organizations including Community Action Agency, UI, Southern CT Gas Company presented information beneficial to the residents. Community Services intends on running this event again this year.

Monthly Food Bank Statistics for February 2009: 270 meals were distributed in the month of February, 2009. Most food has been received by donations from town residents. Community Services would be able to utilize funds from the Emergency food fund in order to purchase food if necessary to meet the needs of all residents who request access. Laurie-Jean Hannon noticed a typo the statistics, *dates 1/2008 and 2/2008 should read 1/2009 and 2/2009.*

Last meeting Mr. Sorkin had been asked about the Special Funds that Community Services manages. In response to this question, Mr. Sorkin will begin providing the Commission monthly snapshots of these various funds, starting with a month by month snapshot through January 2009. In addition to this, Mr. Sorkin provided the commission with a description of each of the funds and their respective guidelines of how of each (Emergency and Outreach Funds) are managed. The Emergency Funds is the largest fund, followed by the Outreach fund, the second largest.

Laurie-Jean Hannon asked if these funds were self-sustaining, or would remain unaffected by the budget. Mr. Sorkin reiterated that these funds were established prior to his coming on board, however the funds come strictly from donations from organizations and individuals.

Amidst the special funds, Mr. Sorkin also provided a snapshot of the Project Graduation fund in which individual contributions are placed specifically for this event.

In regards to the Special funds guidelines provided to the commissioners, it states under eligibility requirements that *“combined household income should not exceed 225% of Poverty Income Level Guidelines.”* Judith Meyers asked Mr. Sorkin what percentage of North Haven households fall below this 225%. Mr. Sorkin did not have this figure, however he explained that as these guidelines were being established, he wanted to be as conservative as possible. As he sees this number as quite conservative, he plans on revising this number for next year. He went on to state that all residents who have applied for assistance since these guidelines have been established have been reviewed on a case by case basis and no applicant had been rejected based upon this 225% criteria.

Laurie-Jean Hannon asked Mr. Sorkin who makes the determination of these funds. Mr. Sorkin stated that he is the individual who makes the determination and went on to discuss the application process. The first step of the process is for the resident is asked to present a statement of need (as it relates to needs for fuel, food, and clothing). As part of the application, the resident must present income documentation for the family. Mr. Sorkin then reviews the application in cooperation with the department staff who initially met with the resident to obtain the application. He then reviews each requested need and first identifies which needs can be met with the resources that are available locally. These resources are later discussed with the resident. For those needs that cannot be met with the local resources, Mr. Sorkin would then make the determination to access the emergency funds to purchase gift cards to purchase the necessary items for the resident. For any gift card or monetary amount awarded, the resident is required to return the receipts for all purchases made with the funds, thus documenting the use of the funds accordingly. Mr. Sorkin will bring copies of the application for the Commission to review for next meeting.

Donna Malley asked Mr. Sorkin if Community Services reaches out to people in town whose homes may have been destroyed by a fire. Mr. Sorkin stated that the department has worked in coordination with the fire department and the American Red Cross in handling the displacement of the families, as well as has provided counseling services as a disaster such as this would incur not only financial consequences, but emotional consequences as well.

Judith McKay asked Mr. Sorkin if referrals can be made by other people (i.e. social worker) on behalf of the individual, or must the request come directly from that individual seeking help. Mr. Sorkin has stated that referrals can come from outside sources, but ultimately he would need to meet with the individual directly to discuss their needs.

Personnel update: The vacancy for the Secretary position has been filled. As of Monday, March 2nd, a new vacancy has become available for the Senior Clerk position, as Dan Riccio has transferred to the Tax office. He has begun actively recruiting.

V. Finance Report:

Daycare: The current snapshot of the Daycare grant was provided. Mr. Sorkin anticipates having the 2008 annual report for the next meeting. Laurie-Jean Hannon noticed a typo on the second page of the daycare report: October, November and December were listed as 2008; these dates will need to be corrected to read 2009. In addition, January 2009, will need to be changed to read January 2010.

During the last meeting's Financial Report of the Daycare, Walter Heinig had asked what the various acronyms on the daycare grant report had stood for. Mr. Sorkin stated that he would have the descriptions of each acronym and what it represents for the next meeting. Below you will find the summary:

C/R = Cash receipts

C/D = Cash disbursements

C/R – Grant	-Checks received from the State of CT
C/R – Fees/Food/CFK	-Checks received for fees, food or Care 4 Kids
C/D –Checks	- Checks disbursed for payment of items i.e.) Thurston Foods
C/D – P/R	-Checks disbursed for payroll
C/D-Fringe	-Checks disbursed for payment of fringe benefits including FICA and Workers Compensation

The January 2009 budget reports were reviewed by the Commission (report ending January 31, 2009).

Community Services January 2009: bottom line = 50.5%. Tom Balga asked for clarification on the Home Maker Program account line, as he thought the line was supposed to be removed from the budget. Mr. Sorkin clarified that the account line has been renamed as Event and Program Expense, although it is not reflected in the budget report.

Welfare: Current snapshot of Welfare expenditures (eviction related expenses) were distributed and reviewed.

January 2009: bottom line relatively on target= 50.7%

Senior Center: Current snapshot of Senior Center expenditures were distributed and reviewed.

January 2009: bottom line relatively on target= 52.7%

VI. Old Business:

Laurie-Jean Hannon welcomed Judith Meyers as the newest addition to the Community Services Commission.

VII. New Business:

Secretary Carla Pelliccio provided Ms. Hannon with a list of all commissioners and their respective contact information. Ms. Hannon asked the commissioners if they would all like a copy of this information, to which they all said yes. Carla will include this contact sheet with the meeting minutes and next meeting agenda in the next reminder mailing.

Judith Meyers asked if there was a way to receive an orientation in order to get acclimated to the information that is being presented during these meetings. Mr. Sorkin welcomed the idea of organizing a

time for all three new commissioners to visit the Community services office and orient them on the programs that are offered and other services that are provided. Ms. Hannon echoed that she felt this would be a great idea and offered to meet with the commissioners as well. She invited the new commissioners to remain after the meeting in order to arrange a time to meet with Mr. Sorkin at the Community services office.

Ms. Hannon stated that she will not be able to attend the Community Conversation event on Saturday, March 21st, but asked if Mr. Sorkin would like a representative from the commission to attend. Mr. Sorkin welcomed any one of the commissioners to come.

VIII. Public Participation:

No public was in participation.

IX. Adjournment:

Laurie Jean Hannon asked for a Motion to Adjourn accepted by Donna Malley, seconded by Judy McKay. The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m.